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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. MUTHAURA	(Kenya)
later:	Mr. HOLOHAN (Vice-Chairman)	(Ireland)
later:	Mr. MUTHAURA (Chairman)	(Kenya)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 84: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/50/13, Add.1, Add.1/Corr.1 and Add.1/Corr.2 Arabic only), A/50/82-S/1995/135, A/50/159-S/1995/312, A/50/168-S/1995/341, A/50/428, A/50/450, A/50/451, A/50/491, A/50/500 and A/50/531)

1. Archbishop MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See) drew attention to two important steps in the process of bringing peace to a land holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims. The first was the agreement signed in September 1995 between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which set in motion the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the establishment of autonomous regions. The second was the appointment of H.E. Afif Safieh as representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization at the Holy See. Those working towards a comprehensive peace settlement needed all reasonable means of support, as there were still extremist forces in the region bringing death and injury to innocent civilians.

2. If autonomy was to have real meaning for the Palestinian people, the international community must ensure that funding was carefully directed so as to create employment. The guarantee of jobs for Palestinians was assuredly one way to guarantee security for Israel. Young people whose education had been disrupted by the intifadah and school closures had to be taught the value of pluralism and cooperation in an educational system which reflected a desire for peace and harmony. He recalled that the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, in collaboration with numerous donor agencies from around the world, had worked with Palestine refugees since 1949 in the areas of education, health services and relief.

3. He drew attention to his delegation's concerns for the Holy City of Jerusalem; as Pope John Paul II had said, its unique and sacred character should be the object of international guarantees that would guarantee its access to all believers. Equal rights must be guaranteed for Jews, Christians and Muslims, allowing freedom of worship and access to the Holy Places. His delegation hoped that the spiritual patrimony of the city would be respected and that while negotiations proceeded, no undue effort would be made to alter the demography of Jerusalem and its environs. Negotiations on the status of Jerusalem must have a spiritual dimension if the three religions were to remain a living presence there.

4. The work of the negotiators in the peace process and the service rendered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) were to be applauded. Pope John Paul II's words to the General Assembly in October 1995 on the need for an ethic of solidarity could be appropriately applied to the work of UNRWA. As the Pope had said, the international cooperation called for by the Charter of the United Nations could not be conceived exclusively in terms of help and assistance, but required a commitment to the solidarity which enabled others to live out the creativity which was the distinguishing mark of the human person.

5. Mr. FOWLER (Canada) said that despite restrictions on the freedom of movement of Agency personnel, a source of grave concern to Canada, UNRWA was

continuing to improve the lives of many refugees by developing essential infrastructures. The peace process was advancing in the Middle East, as attested by the recent signing of the Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and the successful establishment of bilateral relations between Israel and Jordan in the year since the signing of the peace treaty between them. He encouraged Israel, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon to resume bilateral negotiations.

6. In its efforts to coordinate its activities with the Palestinian Authority, UNRWA had shown itself to be sensitive to Palestinian concerns and had demonstrated its willingness to adapt to a constantly changing situation. The Agency had made an invaluable contribution to the Working Group on Refugees, cooperating at all levels in implementing specific projects. He hoped that the international community would generously support the second phase of the Peace Implementation Programme, which had transformed the goals of the peace process into tangible benefits for refugees and displaced persons by creating thousands of jobs. However, Canada remained concerned over the Agency's lack of resources and had been working for an increase in contributions to its programmes.

7. As the peace process moved forward, UNRWA continued to serve as a stabilizing force in the region. It was important that the eventual transfer of its functions to the Palestinian Authority should be planned carefully, to consolidate the management and operational capabilities of the Authority and the emerging Palestinian institutions. Meanwhile, the international community must not neglect those Palestine refugees and displaced persons - the vast majority in fact - who lived outside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

8. The fulfilment of the Agency's tasks remained a priority for Canada, which had maintained its level of contributions despite budget cuts elsewhere and would continue to support the peace process until the Agency could complete the job entrusted to it 45 years earlier.

9. Mrs. BANTSI (Botswana) said that the pursuit of the ideal of lasting peace and the alleviation of human suffering required the political goodwill and untiring efforts of all Member States. UNRWA had achieved some measure of success in providing relief and social services to the Palestine refugees, especially in the fields of education and health. She welcomed the recent signing of the Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and the conciliatory speeches of the Palestinian and Israeli leaders at the Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly in October 1995. There was hope that the cycle of conflict and violence had been broken and that peace and security would return to the Middle East. There would be no better way for the United Nations to celebrate its 50 years of existence than to restore to the Palestine refugees their legitimate right to a normal way of life.

10. While Botswana commended UNRWA for its work in very difficult circumstances and with the added constraint of the debilitating financial shortfalls of recent years, it anxiously awaited a complete cessation of hostilities in the Middle East. The words in the UNESCO Constitution were particularly relevant to the peace process in the Middle East: "... since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

11. Mr. ABOUL-NASR (Permanent Observer for the League of Arab States), speaking of the significant steps achieved towards peace in the region, remarked that recent resolutions adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States had drawn attention to Israel's deferred fulfilment of its obligations under the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and the requirement to respect the specified deadlines, as well as the agreement concerning implementation of the second phase of the Interim Agreement on self-rule. The Council had also called on all States to provide the Palestinian people with material and political support and reasserted that the transfer of embassies to Jerusalem was in breach of the relevant United Nations resolutions and the measures agreed between Israel and Palestine, as was the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In that connection, it was essential to remedy the important issue of Jerusalem to the satisfaction of all those concerned. The Council had similarly called for support for UNRWA, bearing in mind that the problem was an international responsibility and that UNRWA's work should continue until the Palestine refugee question was resolved in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). It had further appealed to all States, including Arab States, to increase their contributions to UNRWA.

12. It should be recognized, however, that the road to a just, durable and comprehensive peace was still long and that the impact of the significant progress already achieved remained limited, particularly concerning the situation of the Palestine refugees. Given its experience, UNRWA could help to surmount the fresh obstacles which had arisen in that respect. It was therefore important to deflect any attempt to jeopardize or place a time-limit on UNRWA's work, which would have damaging implications for the peace process. In that context, he emphasized the particular relevance of the concluding remarks contained in paragraphs 15, 16, 17 and 18 of the report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (A/50/491). Having noted the reported developments in the various programmes run by UNRWA, he drew attention to General Assembly resolution 49/35 G concerning the University of Jerusalem "Al Quds" for Palestine refugees, which he hoped would be implemented at the earliest possible opportunity. He also noted with concern UNRWA's continuing budget deficit, as well as the accumulated effect of the ongoing austerity measures and the fact that the Agency it had been obliged to draw on its capital reserves. He again endorsed the warning contained in document A/59/491 to the effect that a reduction in UNRWA's work or resources would have a negative impact on the peace process, particularly since UNRWA represented an element of stability in the region as long as the Palestine refugee problem remained unresolved.

13. The situation was not improved by the Israeli practices in the occupied territories, such as those cited in paragraph 36 of document A/50/13, which continued in contravention of the agreements reached and international humanitarian law, notably the fourth Geneva Convention. He therefore hoped that the Committee would condemn such repressive practices, which heavily overshadowed Israel's future intentions and could affect the peace process.

14. Commending the efforts of UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, he concluded by affirming the willingness of the League of Arab States to continue its cooperation with UNRWA in support of its work, which was vital to fostering the current peace process.

15. Mr. SANTAPUTRA (Thailand) said that UNRWA was one of the most admired organs of the United Nations as it continued to prepare the groundwork for a durable peace in the Middle East. It was heartening to note the number of positive developments since the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in 1993, with further agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and Israel and Jordan. It was paradoxical that while the political process was moving forward successfully, the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Palestine refugees was creating a greater refugee problem. At such a crucial time the States Members of the United Nations must continue to support and provide increased resources to UNRWA. Thailand felt it was proper that the Agency's headquarters should be relocated to the Gaza Strip, where it would be able to react quickly to the needs of the Palestine refugees, and where it could help to reinforce the peace process.

16. Thailand understood very well the plight of refugees and displaced persons, and fully recognized the need to provide UNRWA with the necessary resources. It was therefore more than doubling its contribution to UNRWA in 1995. It would continue to offer its full support to the Agency until such time as peace was achieved and the new Palestinian administration was able to provide for its citizens.

17. Mr. Holohan (Ireland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

18. Mr. YOOGALINGAM (Malaysia) joined with previous speakers in expressing his appreciation for the outstanding work done by UNRWA in all its areas of operation. He was pleased to note that the Agency had extended its Peace Implementation Programme to include Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. He also welcomed the close cooperation under the second phase of the programme between UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction. He supported the relocation of headquarters from Vienna to Gaza, in which progress had unfortunately been rather slow. He was concerned by the continued interference by the Israeli authorities in the Agency's operations during the period covered by the report of the Commissioner-General, and called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to fulfil its obligations and cooperate fully with UNRWA. He was disturbed by the ongoing restrictions on movement imposed by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as they would only exacerbate the economic hardship of Palestinians living in the area. He deeply regretted the Israeli Government's intention to use confiscated Palestinian land for housing Israeli settlers and the demolition by Israeli authorities of unlicensed houses in the West Bank.

19. His delegation shared the consensus view that no time-limit should be placed on the Agency's existence, and that the eventual transfer of its operations to the Palestinian Authority should be made at the request of the Authority when political and economic conditions permitted. The financial shortfalls faced by UNRWA threatened not only the well-being of the Palestinians but also the peace process itself. Malaysia would continue to contribute within its means to UNRWA and hoped that Member States with the financial capabilities would increase their contributions. His delegation was optimistic that peace

would soon become a reality in the occupied territories, allowing the Palestinian people to charter their own destiny in their own homeland.

20. Mr. ZHANG Wanhai (China) said that his Government had a deep interest in the peace process in the Middle East and welcomed its continuing progress, in the hope that the parties concerned would reach a just and lasting solution through negotiations.

21. The report of the Commissioner-General (A/50/13) indicated that the number of Palestinian refugees had risen steadily over the last three decades, making the refugee issue an urgent reality. The situation in the areas in which UNRWA operated had changed, and the Agency might have to expand its role, depending on developments. It had done much useful work in the education, health, and relief and social services sectors under difficult circumstances, and its dedicated staff had been enormously helpful to the Palestine refugees. China would continue to assist UNRWA within its means, and hoped that the contributions of all donor countries would enable it to overcome its current financial difficulties.

22. Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) said that in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, the problems of the Palestine refugees throughout the region had to be addressed. The services of UNRWA would be needed for a long time to come; even to discuss its life-span would give the wrong signal to donor countries in its current financial constraints. Until they realized their recognized right of return, the refugees would continue to depend on the relief assistance and the social, health and educational services of UNRWA.

23. The Lebanese people had paid dearly with their lives, security and property for the Palestinian cause, which was the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. They believed in the Palestinians' right of self-determination and unanimously rejected any attempt to settle Palestine refugees in Lebanon - an inalterable position embodied in the Lebanese Constitution and in the 1989 Taif Agreement. As part of its normalization policy, his Government was embarking on an extensive programme to return displaced Palestinians, a national endeavour that required much financial support. It thus appealed for additional contributions to ongoing emergency-related and special UNRWA programmes in Lebanon. Lebanon itself pledged to continue its cooperation and coordination with the Agency in the country.

24. His delegation reiterated its reservation regarding the transfer of UNRWA headquarters to the Gaza Strip, for it believed that the transfer to an area under Israeli occupation could not but hamper the Agency's activities.

25. Mr. Muthaura (Kenya) resumed the Chair.

26. Mr. AL-SUWAIDI (United Arab Emirates) expressed the hope that UNRWA programmes to assist the Palestinian people would be expanded as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 48/40. The new situation in the region required increased assistance to UNRWA by donor States and the United Nations. A just and durable solution to the problem of the Palestine refugees, which had persisted owing to Israel's failure to implement the relevant United Nations

resolutions, could be found only by ending their status as refugees and enabling them to exercise their absolute and unconditional right to return to their homeland. The hindrance caused to UNRWA's work in the occupied territories by the Israeli authorities was cause for deep concern and he hoped that Israel would lift its restrictions in that connection with a view to enabling UNRWA to fulfil its humanitarian role. Given the positive developments in the Palestinian-Israeli situation, he hoped that the Palestinian people would secure its right to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent State on its national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital, as well as the right to return to its homeland in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

27. Ms. CARAYANIDES (Australia), welcoming the dramatic advances in the peace process in the Middle East since the previous session of the General Assembly, said that the September 1995 Interim Agreement on the expansion of Palestinian self-rule was a tribute to the vision and determination of the leaders on both sides, who would no doubt show equal determination in making the agreement work.

28. For peace to take root, there must be economic development and an improvement in the quality of life of ordinary Palestinians. That was where the work of UNRWA was so vital. Its social and humanitarian work had been a significant factor in helping, both in the occupied territories and elsewhere in the region, to reduce social and economic pressures, with their potential to exacerbate political tensions in the region. The Agency's mandate should be extended.

29. Australia was pleased that UNRWA was cooperating effectively with the Palestinian Authority. The Agency's expertise would be an important asset in building up the needed institutions, and it would no doubt respond resourcefully and effectively to the demands and challenges of the expanding Palestinian self-rule. Her delegation was also confident that the problems caused by restrictions on movement in the Gaza Strip could be resolved, so that the Agency could carry out its tasks.

30. Australia supported the transfer of UNRWA headquarters to the Gaza Strip, both as a demonstration of the international community's commitment to the peace process and because of the benefits the move should bring to the Gaza Strip; steps must however be taken to ensure that the Agency's operational efficiency was maintained.

31. Australia called upon all Member States to support the Agency's demonstrated record of achievement in difficult and dangerous conditions by providing adequate financial backing. Her own Government was a major contributor to the UNRWA project budget and had even managed to increase its contribution.

32. Mr. CASSAR (Malta) said that the breakthrough in the Middle East peace process, especially the signing of the September accords, called for a reassessment of activities related to Palestine refugees. The question of refugees could now be coupled with a long-term vision of security and stability in the region. UNRWA, which for so many years had been instrumental in alleviating the suffering and problems of people, was today an active partner in seeking a viable solution to one of the international community's most long-

standing refugee problems. Document A/50/13 indicated the Agency's awareness of its dual role as relief agency and, equally important, as a focal point in helping Palestinian society build itself, evolve and develop the necessary infrastructure.

33. The Agency's work remained necessary and even crucial until a political solution to the refugee problem was found within the global framework of the peace process. Its activities in the health sector had been noteworthy for their outreach in providing medical services and programmes targeting specific, urgent problems. Its relief and social services, apart from providing emergency assistance, promoted income-generation through small-industry capital grants; needy groups were assisted and at the same time enabled to build a safety net and provide for themselves. Education, that most crucial and beneficial tool for development in a society, was the sector to which the largest part of UNRWA funds were devoted, and the training programmes it offered indicated a pragmatic vision of how to construct a sustainable future. The programmes for vulnerable groups like women and disabled children were exemplary. The Agency had also had a key role in providing for refugees returning to the Gaza Strip pursuant to the signing of the Cairo agreement in 1994. Nevertheless, the rise in UNRWA-registered refugees had strained resources, and the Agency's ability to cope reflected its cost-effectiveness. A lack of resources could, however, erode the hope fostered by the commitment of the Parties.

34. The best guarantee for a peaceful transition was the building of a self-reliant society, and cooperation between UNRWA and the Palestinian Authority remained an essential component in charting the way forward. On the other hand, notwithstanding the good relations between the Agency and the Government of Israel and the recent decline in incidents related to Agency personnel and property, it was a matter of legitimate concern that according to the Commissioner-General, its operations had never been so hampered as they now were. The continuous commitment of the parties concerned to all aspects of a lasting and peaceful solution was essential, particularly in view of the transfer of UNRWA headquarters from Vienna to the Gaza Strip.

35. Mr. RAHIM (Bangladesh) said that the role of UNRWA was changing as the Middle East peace process advanced. His delegation was happy to observe the level of close cooperation between the Agency and the Palestinian Authority that would eventually take over its work. Until such time, UNRWA deserved continued support in providing for the 3.2 million Palestine refugees. Many of its beneficiaries were second-generation refugees whose needs the Agency had been addressing adequately, though not without difficulty, owing to a lack of sufficient resources. It was noteworthy that the Agency had been the second largest employer after the local government, with 99 per cent of its staff drawn from the Palestinian people. Its activities now covered a wide-ranging area: basic education, training, health care, including immunization of children, family planning and pre- and post-natal care, and social welfare services for women, young people and the disabled. The Agency ran 644 schools with an enrolment of over 400,000 pupils, and its contribution in the field of higher education was equally commendable.

36. Once the new UNRWA headquarters in the Gaza Strip was fully operational, the Agency would be able to assist the Palestinian Authority and the people more effectively. Israel, however, should desist from harassing Agency employees in the occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Bangladesh hoped that the peace process in the Middle East would soon reach a conclusion, so that a continuation of the Agency's work might be considered redundant. The Palestinians themselves, of course, should have a say regarding the future of UNRWA.

37. Mr. Byong Hyun LEE (Republic of Korea) said that in recent years several landmark events had created a framework for building a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The Palestinian-Israeli Interim Agreement of 28 September 1995 had moved the parties even closer to consolidating the peace process.

38. UNRWA had maintained its commitment to alleviating human suffering in the face of growing challenges, successfully establishing mechanisms of coordination with the education, health, and relief and social services sectors. The Republic of Korea supported the Peace Implementation Programme. Thanks to a well-planned and comprehensive strategy, the Agency had made a decisive and remarkable contribution towards improving the socio-economic infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, despite the financial constraints of recent years, and had met the immediate needs of the Palestinian people, such as food and medicine, as well as long-term needs in education and environmental health. The transfer of UNRWA headquarters would enhance coordination between UNRWA and the Palestinian authority. That transfer should be carried out in close consultation with, and at the request of, the Palestinian authority. The question of renewing UNRWA's mandate should also be addressed at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

39. It was essential that Palestinian self-government in Gaza and Jericho should succeed. Recognizing the importance of international assistance to the Palestinian people, the Republic of Korea had offered assistance of US$ 12 million for the rehabilitation projects of the Palestinian people between 1994 and 1998, in addition to its annual cash contribution to UNRWA. It also supported a political settlement in the Middle East based on the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

40. Mr. POERNOMO (Indonesia), observing that the transfer of UNRWA headquarters from Vienna to the Gaza Strip demonstrated the commitment of the United Nations to the peace process in the region and ensured the Agency's effectiveness, said that the extension of Palestinian autonomy to large areas of the West Bank, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from occupied territories and other landmark arrangements heralded a new era. His delegation hoped that simultaneous progress would be achieved in Arab-Israeli negotiations along other tracks, leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement.

41. At the current critical juncture in the peace process and until a political solution to the refugee problems was reached, it was essential for UNRWA to maintain its existing services and play a larger role in improving social and economic conditions. The excellent cooperation between the Agency and the nascent Palestinian Authority in various social sectors was heartening, and the

Agency's long experience in the field should be a valuable resource for the Authority.

42. The Agency's commendable Peace Implementation Programme aimed at rapid infrastructural development and a promotion of the Palestinian private sector through income-generating initiatives that would address the long-term needs of the Palestinian community. In the Gaza Strip as well, where decades of conflict had inflicted tremendous suffering on refugees and displaced persons, UNRWA had made an effort to improve the infrastructure and undertake projects in the various social and economic sectors.

43. Indonesia would contribute to UNRWA and support the Palestinian people as it embarked on the path of nation-building.

44. Mr. ABDERAHMAN (Egypt) said that the international community had always hoped to find a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestine refugee problem in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III), thereby eliminating the need for UNWRA. Although optimism had increased with the commendable progression of the peace process to its current stage, the headway made had increased the need for UNWRA's services to Palestine refugees during the current transition phase. Moreover, with a view to supporting the moves towards peace in the occupied territories, UNWRA had had to adjust to the new challenges and objectives thus created, as well as continue its vital programmes for Palestine refugees outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He pointed out the benefits which the Palestinian Authority could gain from UNWRA's wide experience and praised the achievements accomplished during the first phase of UNRWA's Peace Implementation Programme (PIP I), as well as the swift response of donor States in that connection.

45. Recalling the unanimous assertion of participants at the March 1995 meeting of the Advisory Commission that UNRWA should continue to provide its services until a political solution was found to the refugee problem, he agreed that it was premature to set a time-limit on UNWRA and felt confident that its mandate would be renewed for a further three years. In that context, the international appreciation of its role should be demonstrated by greater contributions to UNWRA's general budget, which remained in deficit.

46. He welcomed the positive developments produced by the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho and was certain that the Palestinian tragedy would be brought to a close once the Israeli occupation had fully ended. He hoped that the next report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA would contain no examples of Israeli transgressions of the rights of the Palestinian people, thus enabling it to serve as testimony to the benefits of the peace process. On that basis, the draft resolutions on UNWRA represented an opportunity to continue the efforts to achieve consensus, particularly in view of the international acknowledgement of UNWRA's importance in fostering the peace process. He therefore hoped that the positions of all parties would reflect the new climate created by the recent progress achieved. None the less, attention should not be focused on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip at the expense of UNWRA's vital assistance to the Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere; the failure to meet their essential needs could have a negative impact on support for the peace process, not to mention the living

conditions of such refugees, towards whom the international community had a humanitarian duty. He hoped that UNWRA's role in the multilateral negotiations on regional cooperation to solve the Palestine refugee problem would contribute effectively towards a just solution and its implementation. The right path was now being followed towards the achievement of UNWRA's purpose in the context of a peaceful settlement that secured the legitimate national rights of the entire Palestinian people.

47. Mr. AL-HASSAN (Oman) said that, despite the far-reaching changes that had taken place, it was of the utmost importance for UNRWA to remain in operation as a symbol of the continued commitment of the international community to providing assistance to Palestine refugees and as a major factor in promoting peace.

48. The Agency had succeeded in making its presence felt over the years despite the restrictions placed on it. With the signing of the peace agreements, the Agency could play a humanitarian role in the context of the difficult situation being experienced by the Palestinian Authority. The meagre resources at the disposal of that Authority were generally insufficient to meet the basic needs of a people that had been subjected for more than half a century to an occupation that had inflicted on it the most severe forms of subjection and displacement and the destruction of its assets. Given the experience acquired by the Agency and its personnel in dealing with the situation of the Palestine refugees, Oman hoped that UNRWA would not only continue to perform its role but would be further strengthened until such time as there was a definitive solution to the refugee problem.

49. The report of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA (A/50/491) gave a bleak picture of the Agency's critical financial situation. Despite the austerity measures introduced and the abolition or curtailment of a number of basic programmes, the financial problem still remained, and could only be solved by an international commitment to continued support for UNRWA programmes, especially at a time of crucial developments in the Middle East. For its part, Israel could not evade the historic responsibilities imposed by the situation and by the international agreements governing the status of refugees.

50. There had been positive changes in the Middle East towards the creation of an appropriate climate for the resolution of issues relating to the conflict in the region. Oman was of the view that a pragmatic examination of the refugee issue was essential for the establishment of a lasting peace in the region that would remedy past wrongs and secure the interests of the Palestinian people and its legitimate right to return to its land.

51. It had been said that a solution to the issue of the land depended on a solution to the issue of the people. The Palestine refugees, in Palestine and elsewhere, were part of the Palestinian people, and a solution to the refugee issue was therefore a step in the right direction for a solution to the issue of the people. The Middle East issue required something better than half-solutions, based as it was on just causes and just demands that were supported by international legitimacy, the principle of land for peace and United Nations resolutions affirming that the Palestinian people must be allowed to return to its land.

52. The report of the Commissioner-General showed that the peace process had had a positive impact among Palestinians and on the attitude and conduct of the Israeli authorities dealing with Agency personnel. Much nevertheless remained unchanged, and there were still restrictions on the return of refugees to their homes and on contacts with relatives in the occupied territories. Oman continued to support the peace process, and urged a close and pragmatic examination of all relevant issues with a view to devising a just and definitive settlement that would take account of the rights of the Palestine refugees.

53. Mr. TÜRKMEN (Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) thanked the Committee for its expressions of support for him and the important Agency which he represented. In response to suggestions from the representative of Japan at the previous meeting concerning improved coordination between United Nations agencies and the Palestinian Authority, he noted that there was already very good coordination between UNRWA and representatives of the Palestinian Authority. The Secretary-General had already taken steps to increase coordination between United Nations agencies and the United Nations and the Palestinian Authority. Resolution 49/35 stressed the importance of the appointment of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories and of coordinating activities throughout the occupied territories. The Secretary-General had appointed a Special Coordinator and several coordinating mechanisms existed, such as the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, the Consultative Group of the World Bank and local aid coordinating committees in Gaza. Thus there was already sufficient coordination in the area; if, however, the suggestion by Japan was a politically motivated one intended to accelerate transfer of responsibility from UNRWA to the Palestinian Authority, then he would refrain from any comment.

54. Responding to another remark made by the representative of Japan at the previous session, the Commissioner-General said that UNRWA's basic mission was not to deliver aid per se but rather to work in human resource development: schools, education, health centres, income generation, environmental health projects, and relief for Palestinian refugees, especially the poorest among them. If UNRWA were to abandon those activities there would be no real need for the Agency. Resolution 49/35 stated that UNRWA should contribute towards the development of economic and social stability in the occupied territories. UNRWA was fulfilling that mandate rather than working on more long-term infrastructure projects such as ports and power plants, in order to provide immediate benefits for the Palestinians in the areas of social structure and employment.

The meeting was suspended at 5.32 p.m. and resumed at 5.43 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 92: THE SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OF CROATIA

55. The CHAIRMAN stated that, after consultations, he took it that the Committee wished to postpone discussion of agenda item 92 until the following meeting.

56. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 18: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (A/C.4/50/L.5/Rev.1, A/C.4/50/L.6) (continued)

57. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco), speaking on a point of order concerning the draft resolution on Western Sahara, stated his concern that the revised version of the draft (A/C.4/50/L.5/Rev.1) had been available for only a few days, and his delegation had not had enough time to discuss amendments with the co-sponsors.

58. Mr. SOUFIANE (Algeria), speaking on a point of order, stated that the debate on Western Sahara was closed and that the Chairman should intercede to prevent a reopening of the debate.

59. The CHAIRMAN stated that although debate on the question was closed, the resolution was still on the table.

60. Mr. ZAHID (Morocco) stated that he simply wished to explain his delegation's request to carry over discussion of the resolution to the following week. Morocco had not been consulted on some new paragraphs in the resolution and therefore the text could not be called a consensus text. In order to arrive at a true consensus text, Morocco needed time to discuss the text with the co-sponsors.

61. The CHAIRMAN stated that in view of the request from Morocco, he would consult with the officers of the Committee and the parties concerned and report to the Committee at the following meeting.

62. Mr. WALLACE (United States of America) stated that the draft resolution contained in document A/C.4/50/L.6 involved a fundamental change in the attitude of the United Nations towards the twelve Territories under consideration in the omnibus resolution, and suggested postponing discussion of the resolution until Friday, 3 November 1995 at the earliest.

63. The CHAIRMAN stated that he would take that suggestion under consideration, consult the officers of the Committee and inform the Committee of his decision at the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.